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February 2, 2005

The Hon. Amanda Burden
Chairman
City Planning Commission
22 Reade Street
New York, NY 10007

Re: 908 Clove Road
Staten Island, NY
Block 323 Lot 42

Dear Chairwoman Burden:

I am writing to bring to your attention a matter of concern to the people of Staten Island, particularly residents on the North Shore. An application was recently submitted to the Board of Standards and Appeals seeking a variance of Section 22-00 of the Zoning Resolution to permit a Use Group 6 development at 908 Clove Road. Specifically, the proposal seeks approval to build a retail and office complex, including a 53-car parking lot, on property that sits amidst private residential housing, a major City park, a cemetery and facilities that support the cemetery.

It is my understanding that the applicant will also need authorization of the City Planning Commission, pursuant to Section 119-30, to construct this project. By way of background, the site is located in the Special Hillside Preservation District. The zoning resolution states that commercial uses "shall not be permitted within the Special Hillside Preservation District, unless an authorization is granted by the City Planning Commission..."

Although it is unclear whether the applicant has yet filed paperwork with the City Planning Commission, I write today to state my strong opposition to the project and to urge the Commission to deny the application. According to Section 119-312 of the zoning resolution, the Chair of the Commission can deny an application for numerous reasons, including if "such development...is so located as to not impair the essential character of the surrounding area" and "where vehicular access and egress is located on an arterial, such location affords the best means for controlling the flow of traffic generated by such development to and from such arterial."

I believe the application proposes a use that is inconsistent with the character and integrity of the area and would adversely affect the surrounding community.

The subject property is bounded by Clove Road; St. Peter's Cemetery, Clove Lakes Park, residential homes and a parcel of land that contains an establishment that sells monuments. The property currently contains a residential home and a building that is used as a flower store. The flower and monument stores primarily provide goods for the adjacent cemetery. Zoning for the property is R3-2 (HS), which permits residential development, but not commercial development, within the context of Hillside Preservation rules.

The proposal to construct a retail and office complex, including a 53-car parking lot, is inappropriate at this location. At a time when Staten Island is moving aggressively to protect the character and integrity of our community, it would be counterproductive to approve an application for a project that is out-of-character with the surrounding area and would detract – rather than enhance – the local neighborhood. While I do not object to the concept of the project itself, I strongly oppose its siting at this location. A commercial project of this size and scope does not belong there.

Accordingly, I urge the Commission to act in the best interests of the local community and all of Staten Island by denying the application. I also ask that you consider this letter in the context of the relevant rules and regulations.

I look forward to hearing from you soon and please do not hesitate to contact me if you wish to discuss this matter further.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Vito Fossella", written in a cursive style.

Vito J. Fossella
Member of Congress